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MEALS ON WHEELS ADVOCATES TO GATHER AT STATE CAPITOL ON THURSDAY

*Non-Profit Representatives Will Meet with Lawmakers to Discuss the
Importance of Funding Home-Delivered Meal Programs*

AUSTIN, TX— On **Thursday morning, April 18th**, representatives of Meals on Wheels East Texas and other Meals on Wheels programs from across Texas will converge on the State Capitol to be a voice for tens of thousands of homebound, at-risk older Texans. At a time when more than 1,000 Texans turn 65 every single day - and one in six elderly Texans is at risk of hunger – the need for home-delivered meals has never been greater.

“In East Texas, we have 60 homebound seniors pending enrollment with our program”, said Kari Kietzer, CEO of Meals on Wheels East Texas. “We continue to see a growing need for seniors in our community. This is the main reason we will urge lawmakers to advance legislation and policies that strengthen home-delivered programs and the seniors we serve.”

The House adopted the Health and Human Services Commission’s exceptional item request of \$7.8 million in General Revenue to increase rates for home-delivered meals in Rider 142. This means more meals and services for more people. The Senate has included full-funding for the home-delivered meals program in the Department of Agriculture in Rider 25 in the Department of Agriculture’s budget.

Since 1993, these rates have only increased by 7 cents. In 2018, Meals on Wheels programs delivered more than 13.5 million meals to homebound seniors and people with disabilities. By funding this request, legislators will help Meals on Wheels programs address unmet needs in rural, suburban and urban communities across Texas.

“We want to ensure that local communities are able to meet the needs of the growing number of seniors and provide the support that enables them to live more nourished lives with the independence and dignity they deserve. At the same time, programs like ours also save taxpayer dollars,” says Kari Kietzer, CEO of Meals on Wheels East Texas, describing the goal of Thursday’s efforts.

Meals on Wheels East Texas utilizes individual and corporate donations to gap fund the full cost of a meal and increase the overall number of home-delivered meals. Our volunteers support Texans’ health with preventative safety and wellness checks on seniors’ physical and mental health. Meals on Wheels East Texas ensures people can stay in their homes. Find out how your donations can support meals in our community at www.mealsonwheelsetx.org.

Meals on Wheels East Texas serves daily meals to over 2,700 homebound senior citizens and disabled persons; covering six counties in East Texas including Gregg, Henderson, Smith, Upshur, Van Zandt, and Wood counties. These meals are prepared fresh at our central kitchen in Tyler, TX. Meals are then delivered by compassionate volunteers to eligible persons who cannot provide meals for themselves. Often this is the only meal, safety check, and friendly visit a client will have each day.

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